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ABSTRACT

The process of developing, pilot testing, and revising a set of English-as-a-Second-Language instructional materials for computer-assisted language learning (CALL) is described. The materials are designed to prepare students for job interviews in the Hong Kong (China) employment market, which differs in some significant ways from other environments. Ideas for questions were drawn from real job interviews at large companies in Hong Kong, job advertisements, and application letters. Ten questions were identified for use in the interview package, and six dialogues were written so students can select from a variety of interview contexts. After going through an interview, students can click on different exchanges to examine what has taken place, evaluate the answers given, read comments, and participate in a cloze exercise. Student feedback on the interviews is invited. Experience suggests that students have found the package useful for building interview skills, oral skills, and confidence. Some student requested interviews more closely related to their own academic majors. Screens from one of the interviews are appended. (MSE)

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Developing a CALL program on WWW

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Abstract

The whole production processes of a CALL package "Job Interview" is described: collecting real life interview questions, producing the package, pilot testing and revising based on feedback. The strengths and weaknesses of using the web for interactive language learning are also discussed. Participants can take a look at the CD-ROM of the CALLware or visit the website later.

Introduction

An extensive survey shows an inadequate supply of learning materials to help Hong Kong Chinese undergraduates to prepare for job interviews. Tapes, books, CD-ROMs in the market are often based on situations socially, economically and linguistically different from Hong Kong. Students report that they do not find these relevant or useful for their job search.

It would seem worthwhile to produce a learning package suited to the needs of local tertiary students. Surveys were thus conducted to collect real interview questions. These were woven into six job interview episodes with dialogues and explanations for short stretches of conversational exchanges. Related language exercises linked to answers were also designed. After the materials were written up, it was put on the World Wide Web and piloted among final year students. Based on their feedback, the program was revised and two more dialogues added to cater for students who did not have their majors related to the jobs they applied for. Two news articles were added to alert students to the need of keeping up with current affairs because of comments from employers.

In this paper, different parts of the program will be shown with explanation of the underlying rationale for specific features. The strengths and weaknesses of using the web for interactive language learning are also discussed. Problems encountered by a computer illiterate teacher who has no time to write up the scripts will also be shared.

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

The Job Interview Package can be found at:

http://www.ilc.cuhk.edu.hk/job/

Surveys to get real interview questions

In order to get the real questions asked at interviews in big companies in Hong Kong, student helpers found out from their friends who were attending job interviews and talked to those students as soon as they finished their interviews in the real world. Questions collected (such as the following) together with the job advertisements, the job application letters formed the basis for writing the scripts of the interview CALL package.

1. Please introduce yourself in five minutes.
2. Why have you chosen Social Science as your major?
3. What is the topic of your final year project?
4. What are the other careers that you have considered? Why?
5. Summarize a situation where you took the initiative to get others going on an important task.
6. Give an example of how you worked effectively with people to accomplish an important result.
7. Why do you want to work in our company?
8. Are you a good leader?
9. Are you willing in work in Mainland China?
10. Do you have any questions for us?

Content of the CALL on the WWW

Based on the job requirement, the background of the interviewee and the actual questions asked, six different dialogues are written (App.I). Learners can click and choose which one they want to work on. If they are not at all confident and want some warming up exercises, they can work on the preliminary quiz in the "Preface to dialogues" (App.II). If they decide to click on "Dialogue 1", they will see an introduction to that interview (App.III) followed by the exchanges (App.IV). These exchanges are recorded on Realaudio and should learners want to listen as well as read the dialogue, they can then click on the sound button. The exchanges are numbered for more interactive exercises. After students have gone through the interview, they can click on the different exchanges to examine in detail what has taken place, to evaluate if the answer given is the most appropriate one and to read the comments on the question and answer (App.V). At any one point or at the end of the interactive exercise, learners can work on the last part, the summary. Here they will get a multiple cloze to do and they can check the answers afterwards (App.VI).

Getting feedback on the CALL package

Learners can click on the "Feedback" icon and tell us how they find the package. We are most concerned about the content and usefulness and hence invite comments on these two. The third one is open to allow any comments users want to communicate to us (App.VII). Based on these comments, the CALL package has been revised. For instance, some students want to watch the whole interview taking place (App.VIII). We have made a video and digitize that for Realvideo. We have added two more dialogues on themes related to current affairs because employers would like their staff to be knowledgeable of the world. The two new dialogues have exercises using newspaper articles as stimulation. We understand that it would be impossible to produce exercises to catch up with daily news, but would like to use these two dialogues to help learners with reading comprehension and to alert them to the need of news reading.

Strengths and weaknesses

An analysis of over 100 comments shows that learners were generally happy with the CALL package. They found the explanation of the answers helpful making them more confident in coping with questions. They also like the audio part and thought that was good for oral practice. The summary to each dialogue was good for revision and consolidation too.

However, there were still many who were not too happy because they wanted the dialogue to be related to their major and to the kind of job they were applying for. The weaker students found the interviewees too strong in academic performance and could not identify with them. Some also wanted video rather than audio.

Conclusion

Overall, the CALL package was well received because it was specifically designed for Hong Kong tertiary students. Visits to the website have continued to maintain at a good level. The production of this package shows that language teachers can write up the scripts, design the exercises and computer competent student helpers can put everything on the web. There is no panic for computer illiterate teachers. Team work can solve the problem.

Appendix I

JOB interview

Job Interview package - Home Page

Preface to dialogues

Project team members

Feedback

Dialogue 1

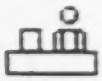
Dialogue 2

Dialogue 3

Dialogue 4

Dialogue 5

Dialogue 6


Dialogue 7

Dialogue 8

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Appendix II

Preliminary Quiz One

Choose what seems to you the *best (not necessarily the only correct one)* answer of the four. Click to find out whether you agree with the writer - and to look at the writer's comments on the less suitable answers.

The questions and answers assume that the interview takes place in Hong Kong, and that whether or not the interviewer is, like you, bilingual, the interview is conducted in English.

1 If you are *short-listed,* this means:

□**A** Your application for the job has been rejected.

□**B** The offer of the job is made to two or three people, and you are one of them.

□**C** The job is yours!

□**D** You are one of several applicants who will be interviewed.

ANSWER

2. Finding out what you can about the company before an interview is regarded as:

□**A** An attempt on your part to get an unfair advantage over other applicants.

□**B** Evidence of strong interest in the job.

Dialogue 1

You will read a short dialogue, followed by questions for you to answer. These are not just comprehension tests - they are designed to help you think about the interviewing procedure from the point of view of the interviewer as well as that of the applicant. These are 'Links' for you to use in association with your reading and response.

The people and events shown in this and the following dialogues are entirely fictitious, and any similarity with actual persons or companies is entirely accidental. Each exchange is assigned a number for ease of reference.

The scene is an office on the premises of an Investment Company in Hong Kong. It is late afternoon, and Mr. Wong, the Marketing Manager, and his colleague, Miss Tam (who is in fact a trainee) have already interviewed several applicants for the position of Marketing Officer Trainee, and are having to fight off fatigue. None of the young men and women they have seen so far is in any way outstanding. They turn to the file which has on it the name of Miss Ellen Chan. It contains her letter of application, her Curriculum Vitae, and three letters of reference. One of these is so general, as to be not informative. Mr Wong lays the other documents before him on the desk, so that both interviewers can see them.

TEXT OF INTERVIEW | INTERACTING WITH DIALOGUE | SUMMARY

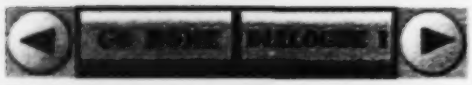
Appendix IV

Dialogue 1

click to listen to the dialogue

Miss Tam	Miss Chan? Will you come in please? Take a seat.
1 *Mr. Wong*	Ah - Miss Ellen Chan? Good to see you. Thank you for coming in to the interview. Now, let me see. You are applying for the vacancy we have for a Marketing Officer Trainee. Isn't that right?
Ellen Chan	Yes, that's right.
2 *Mr. Wong*	Mm. And you're in the final year of a degree in Business Administration?
Ellen Chan	Yes, I expect to graduate in the summer of 1996.
3 Mr. Wong	With French as your Major and Marketing as a Minor, right?
Ellen Chan	No. Marketing is my Major - and French my Minor. I'm looking for a career in Marketing, with my languages as a useful back-up.

Appendix V



INTERACTING WITH INTERVIEW DIALOGUE 1

In what follows you are invited to participate in Ellen Chan's interview as an observer who considers what **might** have happened. Multiple choice questions follow, related to Dialogue 1. Anyone who meets multiple choice questions immediately thinks they are in for some sort of test - and this time you're not! The questions are framed in that way so that you can get a response independently and without delay. Instead of **answers**, you will find **comments** on the alternative possibilities. You may find it best to stop at this point, and print out dialogue 1 so that you have it in front of you.

Refer to Exchange 4

*click here to show the exchange 4

1 If Ellen had *not quickly corrected* Mr. Wong's mistake about her course of study, which of the following seems to you the *most likely* next move by Mr. Wong?

☐ **A** Mr. Wong : I'm afraid we can't offer a position where you would use a modern European language fully.

☐ **B** Mr. Wong : We need someone who has already a good grounding in the study of Marketing .

☐ **C** Mr. Wong : Perhaps our advertisement doesn't make our requirements entirely clear.

☐ **D** Mr. Wong : Can you tell me what proportion of your time has been spent on Marketing ?

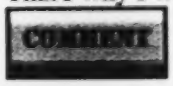
2 Supposing that Mr. Wong had given the response in **C** above, which of the following do you think would have been the *best* answer from Miss Chan?

☐ **A** Miss Chan : No, really, the advertisement is perfectly clear.

☐ **B** Miss Chan : Look, you've got it wrong! *Marketing* is my major subject. That's where I want to make my career.

☐ **C** Miss Chan : Honestly, I'm not primarily concerned about using my languages ...

☐ **D** Miss Chan : *I'm* the one who wasn't clear! *Marketing* is my major and French my *minor* subject. That's why I wanted to apply for the position.



Refer to Exchange 5

Appendix VI

THE INTERVIEW - A SUMMARY

The following paragraph is a summary of suggestions about what to expect at an interview .-but *some of the words in the paragraph have been deleted* .

Fill the 10 blanks, choosing your answer from the four possible choices by clicking on that word. (Notice that the spaces are of equal length, but the words are not.)

Application letters are used ,with -letters of [----------] and *Curricula Vitae* giving details of qualifications and experience, to compile a selected list of candidates who seem promising, and who should be [----------]. Sometimes the interviewing is done by one person, but as a rule, two or more people share the [----------]. You should expect, if you are invited to an interview, that the interviewers will have before them [---------] with your letter, the documents you have provided, and letters from your [--------]. You may be asked to elaborate the information you have given. You should dress and behave so as to show you fully appreciate that this is a formal occasion, important for you, and important also for the employing company. Expect questions about yourself, your [----------], and your reasons for applying for this particular position. Expect more questions too, that [--------] you to show you are a thoughtful adult, who takes the trouble to be informed and has views on a range of [----------] topics. Prepare some questions to ask the interviewer - but ask them only if the answers have not already been given or implied. Avoid asking, at the [----------] whether you have got the job. The decision will not have been made at that stage.

Appendix VII

Feedback on the project

We are now piloting **four** of the eight dialogues on this Job Interview program. We'd really appreciate it if you could give us your comments on the content, usefulness and any other aspect of the program. Thank you very much for your tiime.

Your Name

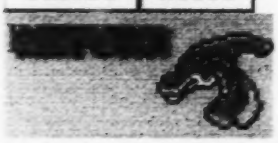
Your EMail Address

Content :

Usefulness:

Others:

Submit Reset



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Appendix VIII

Subject: WebComments

content:
Firstly, the content of this interview package is very detailed. But if we can print out the answers and comments that will be better.
Secondly, the content should focus on applicants--fresh graduates who do not have full time job experience, more, as most of the fresh graduates like this.

usefulness:
It is very useful for those who do not have or have little experience in interview.

others:
The positions applied should not focus too much on Business Administration. It should be evenly distributed among Arts, Science, Social Science, etc.

Subject: WebComments

content:
Wonderful! The dialogues are very practical and we can be familiar with some typical questions that are going to meet in the future interviews. I am impressed by dialogue 4 with the interviewer was bad-tempered and insulted the interviewee. Besides, we can take part in the interview by answering the interactive questions. I appreicate that both smooth and unsuccessful interviews are contained. It let us know how to learn a lesson from bad performance.

If we can watch the real scene in computer instead of reading the texts, it will be more interesting!

usefulness:
Very useful. The most difficult problem for us is to perform well in the interviews. The questions can help us to understand more about our merits and faults.

others:
How can we improve our English in the final year? How can we equip ourselves? How can be well-prepared before an interview? How can we give good answers to some very typical questions?
(To introduce yourself, talk about your future plan...) I hope that this website will contain some information or answers to the above questions.